

Dear Representative Tomiko Santos:

At the February 5 briefing on the Alaskan Way Viaduct, you raised several questions about how the Pioneer Square neighborhood involved in the decision to select the bored tunnel and the differences in construction impacts between the bored tunnel and previously considered options. The following is information prepared by the project team. If you have other questions or would like to schedule a meeting to discuss the project in more detail, please feel free to contact me at 206-464-1221.

Sincerely,
Ron Paananen
Deputy Urban Corridors Administrator

Outreach to Pioneer Square

Pioneer Square is a unique and historic neighborhood and we recognize the importance of involving its residents, businesses, and social service agencies in decisions about the future of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall. While we have completed a great deal of outreach – 30 presentations, 25 notices, door-to-door outreach – future outreach will be critical to ensure the neighborhood's concerns are heard and addressed.

As we considered options for the central waterfront in 2008, Pioneer Square was represented for six months by Craig Montgomery as a member of the stakeholder advisory committee. Unfortunately Craig left his position as executive director of the community association in the middle of the year and there was not a permanent replacement until recently. Pioneer Square residents regularly attended committee meetings and we made a special effort to meet with the association three times in October, November, and December to present the analysis of the eight options being considered as it was presented to the stakeholder group.

A town hall meeting was held in downtown Seattle in December and we hand delivered notification of the event to Pioneer Square businesses; project staff members were able to speak directly to approximately 100 businesses during this outreach. No other downtown Seattle neighborhood received door-to-door notification. In addition, posters were placed throughout the neighborhood to advertise the town hall.

Our outreach to Pioneer Square on utility relocation underway today also serves as an example of the type of outreach we will continue as part of the bored tunnel design and construction. We have sent at least eight written notices about the project, met with the Parking and Access Review Committee, which has Pioneer Square representation, and held an open house that included information about all city, county, and state projects that were beginning construction near Pioneer Square.

While we believe that the outreach to Pioneer Square was extensive and comments carefully considered, we would welcome any suggestions you have on how we can continue to involve this neighborhood as we move forward with the bored tunnel hybrid alternative.

Construction affects on downtown Seattle neighborhoods

Construction of the bored tunnel will result in significantly less disruptions to SR 99 traffic and downtown Seattle neighborhoods than other options previously considered. Closures of SR 99 will be limited, which reduces the amount of traffic being detoured onto downtown city streets. It also avoids over six and a half years of construction on the central waterfront. That construction would have disrupted Pioneer Square's connection to the waterfront businesses, which businesses have told us is an important link.

Construction of the south end portal will have some affects on Pioneer Square. We know that the neighborhood is very concerned about noise, traffic detours, closure of sidewalks, and loss of parking during construction. We are working now to define the potential options for configuring and building the portal so that we can solicit input and determine the best way to address the community's concerns. A south end portal working group will be established this spring, and we will ask representatives from Pioneer Square to participate.

A summary of how construction of the bored tunnel compares to other options previously considered is below

Pioneer Square

With either a cut-and-cover tunnel or new viaduct in the existing location of the viaduct, Pioneer Square would have been next to between six and a half to seven years of construction on the waterfront. Construction would have included relocating utilities, constructing a new viaduct around the existing viaduct or digging a trench for the tunnel, demolishing the old viaduct, and restoring the surface street. With a new viaduct, two lanes of traffic would only be open to drivers during peak travel times; traffic would be re-routed during the other parts of the day. With a cut-and-cover tunnel SR 99 would be permanently closed during construction.

This is compared to the bored tunnel hybrid alternative, which limits the amount of construction on the waterfront to the west of Pioneer Square to utilities relocation, viaduct demolition, and Alaskan Way restoration. We estimate this to take approximately two years. The south portal will most likely be constructed on the WOSCA site, although some work may be required on First Avenue south of King Street. This is still being evaluated and more information will be available over the next several months.

Central Waterfront

As described above, with either a cut-and-cover tunnel or a new elevated viaduct, the central waterfront businesses would have experienced between six and half and seven years of construction. Less disruptive construction will be required with the bored tunnel.

Central Downtown

The Pike Place Market and central downtown core (including Belltown) will experience slightly less disruptions with the bored tunnel. Disruptions will primarily occur with removal of the viaduct up to the Battery Street Tunnel and construction of a new connection from Alaskan Way to Elliott and Western avenues over the railroad tracks. We estimate this to take approximately one year of construction, which would have been a similar length of construction for any of the other options considered. More intensive impacts on the Pike Place Market with the I-

I-5/Surface/Transit Hybrid Alternative would have been required with the proposed conversion of Alaskan Way and Western Avenue to a one-way couplet (Western Avenue would become three lanes in one direction).

South Lake Union and Uptown

Construction of the portal north of the Battery Street Tunnel will have disruptions on the neighborhoods to the east and west of Aurora Avenue. It is estimated to take two years to build the portal compared to 15 months to construct new surface streets proposed with the I-5/Surface/Transit Hybrid or construct an underpass at Republican Street with the SR 99 Elevated Bypass Hybrid.